

Trumbull Congregational Church

Safe Church Policy

As a community of Christian faith, the Trumbull Congregational Church, United Church of Christ ("TCC") is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. All persons associated with TCC should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment, and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention of the church to take action in an attempt to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy, and if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth

1. Volunteer Form: All adult workers will complete a Volunteer Form to be reviewed by the pastor or other appointed persons. Any person who interacts with a child at TCC in any volunteer capacity for Sunday School, Youth Group programs, nursery care, youth choirs, Confirmation, and Vacation Bible School may also undergo a background check.
2. Covenant Statement: All adult workers will be asked to sign a Covenant Statement.
3. Age Requirements: An adult is a person of at least 18 years of age. An adult worker should be at least 5 years older than the oldest child in the group and should be an active participant in the church for 6 months prior to working with children (unless he/she has experience working with children at another church/school and can supply references).
4. Doors: When possible, doors to classrooms should be left open (unless two adults are present).
5. Adequate Supervision: Whenever possible, two adults will be present in all settings of ministry with children and youth. A "roamer" will circulate between classes during Sunday School hours to provide additional supervision, particularly when there is one adult in a classroom.
6. First Aid and CPR Training: The church will inform adult workers about local CPR/First Aid training opportunities, and volunteers will be encouraged to attend.
7. Should a behavioral problem arise, the teacher or assistant will have the parent called in for assistance, or the child will be brought back to church for the remainder of the class period.
8. No teacher should ever enter the bathroom with a child. They may walk them to the bathroom and wait in the hall outside. Should the child need help fastening or unfastening their clothing, the teacher may step inside the bathroom and leave the door open while assisting the child.
9. All social media contact should be appropriate and related only to church business and activities.
10. All teachers/volunteers must be aware of the TCC Safe Church policy, which includes all procedures as well as legal information about abuse and reporting, as well as a congregational plan for responding to allegations of

abuse. This policy will be reviewed by the Christian Education Director at the staff meeting at the beginning of each new school year.

The Board of Christian Education will review the policy annually.

Basic Procedures for Field Trips

1. Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property and any overnight activities. Contact information shall be gathered for each participant.
2. There will be a minimum of two adults present for every Youth Group meeting/activity at the church, at a member's house, or at an outside place.
3. The minimum age for drivers who are transporting children and youth is 21, and there should be more than one youth per vehicle.

Social Networking Guidelines

1. Adults should not submit "friend" requests to minors or youth. Youth may request friendships with adults, and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
2. When and where available, authorized youth workers may choose to create separate private and professional profiles on networking sites to create a line of privacy.
3. Authorized youth workers who choose to accept friend requests from minors or youth should use all privacy settings applicable to shield youth from any inappropriate content that may exist within the authorized youth worker's profile.
4. All Communities of faith should take care to secure signed Media Release forms from adults and guardians of minor children who will or may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
5. Photos that are published on church sponsored sites should not include name or contact information for minor children or youth.

Legal Information about Abuse and Reporting

1. "Child Abuse" has occurred when a child has had non-accidental physical injury(ies) inflicted upon him or her, or has injuries which are at variance with the history of them, or is in a condition which is the result of maltreatment, such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment. (CT General Statutes 46b-120)
2. According to CT State Law, members of the clergy are mandated reporters and are therefore required "to report or cause a report to be made when, in the ordinary course of their employment or profession, they have

reasonable cause to suspect or believe that a child under the age of 18 has been abused, neglected, or is placed in imminent risk of serious harm.” (CT General Statutes 17a-101a)

3. Mandated reporters must report orally to the Dept. of Children and Families or a law enforcement agency within 12 hours of suspecting that a child has been abused or neglected and must submit a written report to DCF within 48 hours of making the oral report (DCF Abuse and Neglect Hotline is: 1-800-842-2288).

4. Sunday School teachers and adult workers are not mandated reporters. All cases of suspected abuse should be brought to the Pastor (unless the Pastor is involved, in which case the suspected abuse shall be brought to the Moderator who will follow the procedure below).

Congregational Plan for Responding to Allegations of Abuse

1. Take any necessary steps to secure the child’s immediate safety.
2. Treat the accused abuser with dignity, but immediately remove him or her from further involvement with children and youth.
3. Notify the proper law enforcement or child protective services agency.
4. Notify the church’s insurance agent and the church’s attorney.
5. Keep a written record of the steps taken by the church in response.
6. If necessary, all upon your designated spokesperson to make any necessary statements or responses to the news media.
7. If necessary, prepare a brief and honest statement, if necessary, that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim’s privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.
8. Be prepared to cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.



Glossary of Terms

Authorized youth worker —

any adult individual who is designated by a community of faith to work with minor children: This includes chaperones, employees and volunteers.

Community of Faith —

a congregation, cluster of churches, association or conference that engages in ministry together.

Cluster Churches/youth ministries —

two or more congregations that work together to form, support or maintain ministries to and with youth.

Church Sponsored Sites —

any group, page or list serve that is created by a designated member of a community of faith for the purpose of establishing, maintaining or growing ministries to and with youth and/or adults.

Mandatory Reporting —

individuals who work with youth are responsible to report to clergy any activity or language which indicates that a minor is being severely harmed (sexual assault, physical abuse or emotional torment) by a youth or adult, considering doing severe harm to themselves (thoughts or plans of suicide) or severely harming others (abuse, homicide or rape). Any information that is posted on a church sponsored site that includes this type of information should be reported to clergy, documented in church records and deleted from the site.

Inappropriate Content —

refers both to content that is improper or offensive, but also content that might be suited to the medium but not to the relationship.

The church will communicate and post these rules and procedures to children, youth, parents, and adult workers.